

USS *Donald Cook*—Tak

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Safety stand-downs usually represent a positive response to a negative situation. For Sailors aboard USS *Donald Cook* (DDG-75), though, the May 2004 event was a chance to reinforce an already successful safety program.

As Chief Petty Officer Greg Smith explained in his opening remarks, “We’ve had some crewmen involved in motor-vehicle crashes, but, in most cases, they were the victims.” He cited the example of a fellow chief who recently had been rear-ended during a trip to Orlando. The victim had seen the young girl coming in his rearview mirror but had no way to get out of her path.

The stand-down also provided an opportunity, with the approaching critical days of summer, for ship's safety personnel to ensure all hands stay on board with SecDef's call for a 50-percent reduction in mishaps by FY2005. Recognizing that complacency figures into most mishaps, Chief Smith shared an analogy with his shipmates, one which he learned from his dad, a farmer: “The day you lose respect for equipment is the day it’s going to hurt you.”



An instructor talks to shipmates about heat stress and the precautions people need to take to prevent it.



USS *Donald Cook* (DDG-75)

A couple of guest speakers shifted the stand-down into high gear, starting with Dale Wisnieski, a motorcycle enforcement officer with the Chesapeake Police Department for the last six-and-a-half years. Officer Wisnieski also is a master-at-arms in the Naval Reserve. He noted that he writes an average of 15 to 20 traffic citations a day during an eight-hour shift, and, as you might guess, young Sailors and Marines receive many of these tickets.

Officer Wisnieski also shared the sobering details of a particularly gruesome incident that occurred back in September 2003. In the wee hours one Sunday morning, a 25-year-old Navy PO2 took a 32-year-old woman for a ride on his motorcycle. A newspaper account of the incident said the two were “traveling with another couple,” also on a motor-

king Care of Their Own



Chesapeake Police Officer Wisnieski lets the audience know that he sometimes wears a Navy uniform, too—as a master-at-arms in the Naval Reserve.

cycle. More precisely, though, according to Officer Wisnieski, the PO2—with a BAC of 0.13—was racing a buddy. At 130 mph, the PO2 lost control of his bike and slammed into a guardrail.

The same newspaper account said the young woman was “thrown from the PO2’s motorcycle and died at the scene.” But, as Officer Wisnieski explained, that description of what happened doesn’t tell the real story. It seems the 32-year-old became wedged between the bike and the guardrail and was dragged for a distance of 547 feet. Officials picked up her body in 79 pieces. They found her head still wedged in a helmet, and one arm wasn’t found until the next day in someone’s yard.

In closing his presentation, Officer Wisnieski asked all *Donald Cook* Sailors to do him, themselves and motorists everywhere a favor and stay off the roads the next time they drink. “Call the duty officer, hail a taxi, give your keys to a sober friend—do anything else but get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle,” he pleaded.

“Don’t forget the new Virginia DUI laws that go into effect July 1, either,” he cautioned. These laws make Virginia one of the toughest states in the nation for drunken drivers.

For example, people caught with a BAC of 0.15 or greater face five days of mandatory jail time, even if they are first-time offenders. Those with a BAC of 0.20 face a 10-day sentence. The old thresholds for mandatory sentences were .20 and .25, respectively. A second conviction within five years carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 days, and, within 10 years, the minimum sentence is 10 days. A third conviction within five years carries a minimum sentence of 180 days, and, within 10 years, the minimum sentence is 90 days. Also, all arrests for DUI immediately will be listed in an individual’s criminal record, and all first-time convictions will carry a minimum mandatory fine of \$250.

The second guest speaker at USS *Donald Cook*’s safety stand-down was Kim Tamburino of the Hoffman Beverage Company’s consumer affairs office in Virginia Beach, Va. She described the efforts of Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc. to educate Sailors and Marines about making responsible choices when they drink.



A *Donald Cook* Sailor tries to walk a straight line while wearing a pair of fatal-vision goggles.

Anheuser-Busch is sponsoring free presentations of Street Smart for commands. These no-holds-barred presentations feature paramedics demonstrating the kinds of life-changing experiences they and firefighters face every day on the streets—where the crashes occur, where poor choices are played out, where teamwork is a must, and where split seconds can save a life. *[For more information about scheduling a Street Smart presentation, contact your local Anheuser-Busch wholesaler or distributor, or write to Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc.; Consumer Awareness and Education Department; One Busch Place, 202-7; St. Louis, Mo. 63118. Commands in the Hampton Roads area should contact Kim Tamburino, phone: 757-552-8336, or e-mail: ktamburino@hoffmanbeverage.com.]*

When the guest speakers had finished, the ship's crew broke into groups and attended safety discussions about such topics as water-sports equipment, ATVs, and motorcycles. These discussions concentrated on the required PPE for operating each type of vehicle. Volunteers also demonstrated fatal-vision goggles, which simulate the visual impairment caused by alcohol and other drugs.

Another discussion centered on heat stress and the precautions people need to take to prevent it—while working outdoors or during a shipboard evolution, such as firefighting. During this segment, volunteers demonstrated various prescribed ways (e.g., fireman's carry, cross-arm carry, etc.)



The white hat and dress jumper shown here belonged to the Sailor who was driving this car and died when it crashed.



Guest speaker Kim Tamburino talks with Chief Smith during a break in activities.

of evacuating personnel who are overcome by heat stress.

There also was a weightlifting demonstration, complete with the instructor showing shipmates the stretching exercises they should do beforehand. He cautioned them never to lift more than they are capable of.

The final area discussed was the dangers of power lawn mowers. As the instructor pointed out, the two most common mower-related injuries are getting cut by the blade or being hit by a propelled object. He said all users should wear face shields or safety goggles or glasses with side shields, safety shoes, and hearing protection. Gloves may be worn when using walk-behind mowers. Safety helmets should be worn when using a riding mower around tall bushes and low-hanging tree limbs. Finally, all mower-discharge chutes should be guarded with shields or approved grass-catchers to deflect or stop foreign objects during operation.

The morning's events ended on a note of irony. As I was talking to Chief Smith before leaving the ship, he told me a fellow chief's wife just had called to say a drunk driver had crashed into her car in a parking lot. Sketchy details available at that time indicated the drunk simply hadn't slept off all the effects of his "toot" the previous night. 🚗